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SUBJECT: Iran Election Outrage Muted For Time Being

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: A broad range of Iranian visa applicants interviewed in the past two weeks expressed that the public unrest in Iran has calmed, but hope outrage over the recent election in the long run will force Mahmoud Ahmadinejad out of office. As one Armenian middle aged couple stated, "this election has shattered the hopes that the Islamic Republic was at least in part democratic." END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) The majority of our applicants in the past few weeks stated although the streets are much quieter, the situation in Iran continues to be unstable. Some applicants stated that they were not interested in the unrest and hoped that things would continue as before; however, most applicants continued to express anger over the election and hope for change. Many claimed that 99 percent of the population remains ready to oppose the status quo. Most believe that although the situation appears calm now, in the long run Ali Khamanei will have to relent.

3. (SBU) The volume of requests to Embassy Ankara for expedited IV appointments which increased during the height of the protests has subsided. Iranian applicants are still concerned about the security situation with many asking about their children's welfare. Applicants from Tehran, Shiraz, Gorgan, Mashhad and Isfahan all noted that protests have occurred but in much smaller numbers compared to the larger initial protests in the weeks after the election. A Kurd from West Azerbaijan noted that most Kurds are in opposition to the election results but due to their precarious minority status keep quiet. A couple of religious leaders interviewed preferred not to comment on the situation and insisted that people should speak with "softer words."

4. (SBU) A Tehran based female lawyer estimated that at most the protest size may be in the two to three thousand range. Applicants report that arrests, beatings and killings, especially of young Iranians, continue. Another Tehrani explained that his AMCIT fianc and he avoided the streets due to the prevalent use of tear gas to prevent large gatherings. Another applicant showed bruises on his hand and noted that two weeks ago in Tehran he and his friends protested, but were beaten so harshly that some of them were covered in blood. Many applicants accredit the relative calm in the past few weeks to the quick and harsh reaction to the planned protests by security forces. On the other hand, a former revolutionary guard draftee emphasized that only permanent members of the guard are loyal to Khamanei with most draftees opposed to the current regime.

5. (SBU) Based on various accounts it appears that most of the daily protesters are the Iranian youth. Many noted that the opposition has to find opportunities for officially sanctioned mass gatherings such as Friday prayers. According to one youth Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was supposed to give tomorrow's Friday prayer sermon in Tehran, but Khamanei prevented this and put in a pro-regime cleric. Applicants report that Mir-Hossein Mousavi is not in custody but is under de-facto house arrest. Communication between Mousavi and the public is limited to his website. Many noted that public protest is difficult because as soon as there is an announcement, authorities arrive at the scene prior to the protesters.

6. (SBU) The majority of applicants still articulated hope that in

the long run change will come out of the post election unrest. One Islamic Azad University student believes that the more Ahmadinejad continues to "mess up" the country the more the regime will suffer which will eventually force change. One applicant noted that though the streets are clear, every night thousands of Iranians continue to take to their rooftops and terraces and chant "God is great" in defiance of Khamanei. Many younger Iranians noted they were waiting for an opportunity to protest more. Some applicants opined that Mohammad Khatami, Mousavi, and Rafsanjani must continue their opposition or risk jail or worse.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: The general Iranian public continues to hope for change, but it appears that without more guidance from the opposition leadership current civil unrest is limited to small groups of Iranian youth. Only a handful of applicants believe that the current situation can revert to pre-election calm with the majority still holding onto the belief that the system must change. Despite the appearance of relative calm it appears unlikely that calm will return without the constant use of intimidation and force.

18. (SBU) Embassy Ankara has also experienced a number of unusual occurrences with visa applicants that may be related to stress resulting from the unrest in Iran. Within the past month, five Iranians passed out during their interviews. One returning resident applicant tried to kill himself when he was refused. The following Monday an Iranian, without an appointment, attempted to jump over the Embassy fence and nearly died of blood loss when he got caught in the razor wire. END COMMENT.

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